

# State of Wisconsin

## Homeless Management Information System

### Policies and Procedures

Department of Administration

Division of Housing

2013

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# 1. Introduction

The statewide implementation of a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) is administered by the Department of Administration, Division of Housing (DOH) and Bowman Internet Systems. Bowman Internet Systems administers the central server and DOH administers user and agency licensing, training and compliance. HMIS is an internet-based database that is used by homeless service organizations across Wisconsin to record and store client-level information about the numbers, characteristics and needs of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness.

HMIS enables service providers to measure the effectiveness of their interventions and facilitate longitudinal analysis of service needs and gaps within Continuums of Care (CoC). Information that is gathered from consumers via interviews conducted by service providers is analyzed for an unduplicated count, aggregated (void of any identifying client level information) and made available to policy makers, service providers, advocates, and consumer representatives. Data aggregated from HMIS about the extent and nature of homelessness in the state of Wisconsin is used to inform public policy decisions aimed at addressing and ending homelessness at local, state and federal levels.

Guidance for the implementation of Wisconsin's HMIS is provided by a broad-based advisory board that is committed to understanding the gaps in services to consumers of the human service delivery system in an attempt to end homelessness.

This document provides the policies, procedures, guidelines and standards that govern HMIS operations, as well as the responsibilities for Bowman Internet Systems, the Advisory Board, DOH staff and participating agency staff.

## 1.1 HMIS BENEFITS

Use of HMIS provides numerous benefits for service providers, homeless persons and the State of Wisconsin.

### Benefits for service providers

- Provides online real-time information about client needs and the services available for homeless persons.
- Assures confidentiality by providing information in a secured system.
- Decreases duplicative client intakes and assessments.
- Tracks client outcomes and provides a client history.
- Generates data reports for local use and for state and federal reporting requirements.
- Facilitates the coordination of services within an organization and with other agencies and programs.
- Provides access to a statewide database of service providers, allowing agency staff to easily select a referral agency.

### Benefits for homeless persons

- Intake information and needs assessments are maintained historically, reducing the number of times homeless persons must repeat their stories to multiple service providers.

- The opportunity to provide intake and life history one time demonstrates that service providers consider the homeless person's time is valuable and restores some of the consumer's dignity.
- Multiple services can be easily coordinated and referrals streamlined.

#### Benefits for the State of Wisconsin

- Better able to define and understand the extent of homelessness throughout Wisconsin.
- Better able to focus staff and financial resources to the agencies and programs in geographical areas where services for homeless persons are needed the most.
- Better able to evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions and specific programs and services provided.
- Better able to provide the State Legislature and the federal government with data and information on the homeless population in Wisconsin.
- Better able to meet all federal reporting requirements.

## 2. Requirements for Participation

### 2.1 HMIS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Advisory Board

1. Implement and continuously improve Wisconsin's HMIS.
2. Ensure the HMIS scope aligns with the requirements of agencies, HUD and other stakeholder groups.
3. Address any issue that has major implications for the HMIS, such as policy mandates from HUD or performance problems with the HMIS vendor.
4. Reconcile differences in opinions and approaches, and resolve disputes arising from them.
5. Review, revise and approve HMIS policies developed by the System Administrators.
6. Develop and approve the HMIS Policies and Procedures as the governance charter with the Department of Administration, Division of Housing.

#### Software Vendor (Bowman Systems)

1. Design the HMIS to meet HUD HMIS Data Standards.
2. Develop a codebook and provide other documentation of programs created.
3. Provide ongoing support to the HMIS System Administrators pertaining to needs of end-users to mine the database, generate reports and other end-user interface needs.
4. Administer the product servers including web and database servers.
5. Monitor access to HMIS through auditing.
6. Monitor functionality, speed and database backup procedures.
7. Provide backup and recovery of internal and external networks.
8. Maintain the system twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
9. Communicate any planned or unplanned interruption of service to the System Administrators.

#### System Administrators (State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration, Division of Housing)

1. Oversee all contractual agreements with funders, participating organizations and consultants in adherence to the policies and practices of HMIS and recommendations of the HMIS Advisory Board.
2. Monitor compliance and periodically review control decisions.
3. Communicate with participating organization leadership and other stakeholders regarding HMIS.
4. Authorize usage and access to HMIS for users who need access to the system for technical administration, data entry, editing of client records, viewing of client records, report writing, or administration of essential activities associated with carrying out HMIS responsibilities.
5. Develop reports.
6. Mine the database to respond to the information needs of participating organizations, community stakeholders and consumers.
7. Document work on the database and the development of reports/queries.
8. Provide technical assistance as needed with program sites.
9. Provide training and technical assistance to participating organizations on policies and procedures and system use.
10. Respond to questions from users.

11. Coordinate technical support for system software.
12. Communicate with participants regarding problems with data entry and support data quality.
13. Monitor agency participation, including timeliness and completeness of data entry.
14. Communicate any planned or unplanned interruption in service.
15. Audit policy and procedure compliance.
16. Serve as the applicant to HUD for any HMIS grants that will cover the Continuum of Care geographic area.
17. Complete an annual security review.

#### Agency Administrator

1. Edit and update agency information in HMIS.
2. Ensure that the participating agency obtains a unique user license for each user at the agency.
3. Establish the standard report for each specific program created.
4. Maintain a minimum standard of data quality by ensuring all the HUD Universal Data Elements are complete and accurate for every individual served by the agency and entered into HMIS.
5. Maintain the HUD required elements for each program.
6. Ensure agency staff persons receive required HMIS training, and review the State of Wisconsin HMIS Policies and Procedures, the Agency Partner Agreement and any agency policies which impact the security and integrity of client information.
7. Ensure that HMIS access is granted only to staff members that have received training, have completed the Wisconsin User Agreement and are authorized to use HMIS.
8. Grant technical access to HMIS for persons authorized by the System Administrators by creating usernames and passwords.
9. Notify all users at their agency of interruptions in service.
10. Provide a single point of communication between users and HMIS staff at the Department of Administration, Division of Housing.
11. Administer and monitor data security policies and standards, including:
  - User access control;
  - The backup and recovery of data; and
  - Detecting and responding to violations of the policies and procedures or agency procedures.

#### Users

1. Take appropriate measures to prevent unauthorized data disclosure.
2. Report any security violations.
3. Comply with relevant policies and procedures.
4. Input required data fields in a current and timely manner.
5. Ensure a minimum standard of data quality by accurately answering all the HUD Universal Data elements for every individual entered into HMIS.
6. Inform clients about the agency's use of HMIS.
7. Take responsibility for any actions undertaken with their usernames and passwords.
8. Complete required training.
9. Read the WISPNews email newsletter.

## 2.2 AGENCY ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

### Participation Agreement Documents

Partner Agencies must complete the following documents:

1. **Partnership Agreements** must be signed by each participating agency's executive director. The Department of Administration, Division of Housing will retain the original document. The participation agreement states the agency's commitment to adhere to the policies and procedures for effective use of HMIS.
2. **Wisconsin User Agreements**, which list user policies and responsibilities, must be signed by each authorized user. The original documents must be kept by the originating agency.

### User Access to the System

The Agency Administrator of the participating homeless serving agency will determine user access for Case Manager III and lower to the specific program data within organization. The Agency Administrator will generate username and passwords within the administrative function of the software.

The Agency Administrator and all users must receive training before access to the system is granted.

### User Training Requirements

All new users are required to attend new user training with the HMIS Lead Agency prior to receiving access to the system. If the HMIS Lead Agency deems data quality does not meet minimum standards, users may be required to repeat this training.

All users are required to attend annual security training to retain their user license.

All users are required to attend at least two general HMIS trainings annually. New user training will count toward the general training requirement.

All users with Advanced Reporting Tool (ART) Licenses are required to attend at least two ART trainings annually in addition to the required general HMIS trainings.

### Users who are also Clients Listed in HMIS

In order to prevent users from editing their own file or files of immediate family members, all users will agree to a conflict of interest statement that is part of the User Agreement. Users must disclose any potential conflict of interest to their Agency Administrator. Users will be prohibited from making changes to the information in their own file or the files of their immediate family members. If a user is suspected of violating this agreement, the System Administrator will run the audit trail report to determine if there was an infraction.

### Passwords

- **Creation:** Passwords are automatically generated from the system when a user is created. The Agency Administrator will communicate the system-generated password to the user.
- **Use:** The user will be required to change the password the first time they log onto the system. The password must be at least 8 characters and alphanumeric. Passwords should not be able to be easily guessed or found in a dictionary. Passwords are the

individual's responsibility and users cannot share passwords. Users may not keep written copies of their password in a publicly accessible location.

- Storage: Any passwords that are written down are to be stored securely and must be inaccessible to other persons. Users are not to store passwords on a personal computer for easier log on.
- Expiration: Passwords expire every 45 days. Users may not use the same password consecutively. Passwords cannot be re-used until 2 password selections have expired.
- Unsuccessful login: If a user unsuccessfully attempts to log-on 3 times, the User ID will be "locked out," and access permission will be revoked rendering the user unable to gain access until his/her password is reset in the manner stated above.

#### Inputting Data

Agencies participating in the HMIS must meet the minimum data entry requirements established by the HUD Standards.

#### Tracking of Unauthorized Access

Any suspicion of unauthorized activity should be reported to the Department of Administration HMIS staff.

#### Agency Administrator

Agencies with 10 or more users must designate one person to be the Agency Administrator. Agency Administrators must undergo a criminal background check. Agencies with fewer than 10 users may forego designating an Agency Administrator. DOH HMIS staff will perform Agency Administrator responsibilities for these agencies.

The Agency Administrator will be responsible for creating usernames and passwords, and monitoring HMIS access by users at their agency. This person will also be responsible for ensuring new agency staff persons are trained on how to use the HMIS by the System Administrators and for ensuring that new staff are aware of any agency or program specific data entry requirements.

The Agency Administrator must identify the assessments and requirements for each program, and work with the System Administrators to properly set up each program in the HMIS.

#### Client Consent Forms

In addition to posting the HMIS Consumer Notice, agencies may require clients to sign a client consent form. The form requires clients to authorize the electronic sharing of their personal information with other agencies that participate in HMIS when data sharing is appropriate for client service.

#### Data Protocols

Agencies may collect information for data elements in addition to the minimally required data elements established by the HMIS Advisory Board in accordance with HUD. Agencies must maintain consistency with data collection and entry within each program.

## 2.3 ADVISORY BOARD REQUIREMENTS

The State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration, Division of Housing (DOH) HMIS staff will convene and facilitate the HMIS Advisory Board. DOH HMIS staff will invite members to



serve on the Advisory Board, and has the final authority to approve the appointment of any new member. All advisory board members must be active HMIS users.

DOH HMIS Staff will make a proactive effort to have representation from consumer representatives, shelter and transitional housing programs, other homeless services organizations and government agencies that fund homeless assistance services. Replacement representatives will be invited to serve on the committee when participation from the organizations currently on the committee has been inconsistent or members are inactive.

#### Representation

All Wisconsin continuums of care will be represented on the advisory board.

Representation on the committee should reflect diversity by taking into consideration the following attributes:

- **User level** (e.g. Case Manager, Agency Administrator)
- **Geographic** location of the agency where committee member is employed (e.g. Western part of the State)
- **Density** of the location of the committee member's agency (e.g. Urban v. Rural)
- **Size** or volume of the committee member's agency or program (e.g. Large or smaller)
- **Type** of service or program provided by the committee member's agency (e.g. Food Pantry or Transitional Housing)
- **Special interest** or demographic served by the committee member's agency (AIDS and DV)

#### Meeting Frequency

Meetings will be held quarterly. Important policy items that emerge in between meetings will be handled by the board via e-mail.

#### Attendance

Advisory board members are required to attend all meetings. Members who are absent from two consecutive meetings must resign from the committee, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

#### Accessibility

The board members will be publicly identified and available for contact from HMIS users and agencies throughout the state.

#### Policies and Procedures

Approval of strategy, policy and procedures will be attempted through consensus and conversation, but will ultimately be decided by simple majority.

#### Letters of Commitment

All members of the Advisory Board must sign letters of commitment.

#### Length of Member Term

Advisory board members voluntarily agree to serve two-year terms on the Wisconsin HMIS Advisory Board. Membership may be renewed for additional terms upon agreement by the DOH, the Advisory Board and the member seeking reappointment.

## 2.4 HMIS DATA LEADS

HMIS Data Leads assist homeless service agencies within a specific geographic region or Continuum of Care with using HMIS on behalf of DOH. HMIS Data Leads provide assistance with system training and maintenance, and using HMIS to run reports.

### Responsibilities of HMIS Data Leads

1. Assess HMIS capacity and make recommendations to each agency on how to improve their technology as it relates to HMIS.
2. Assess current agency report needs, and develop plans for improved performance for programs currently entering data into HMIS.
3. Expand the use of HMIS to programs that do not track their data in HMIS.
4. Represent HMIS in meetings to keep partner agencies aware of HMIS matters that may affect partner agencies happening locally, statewide and nationally.
5. Coordinate HMIS trainings held at the Department of Administration via webinar or hosted locally.
6. Communicate with users about correcting problems with data entry and improving data quality.
7. Convene meetings of all users within the HMIS data lead community to discuss issues related to HMIS, and the direction that the local community is taking in regard to sharing data and recording services.
8. Report on the aggregate data of the partner agencies.

## 2.5 HMIS USER LEVELS

### Resource Specialist I

Users at this level may access only the ResourcePoint module. Users may search the database of area agencies and programs, and view the agency or program detail screens. A Resource Specialist I cannot modify or delete data, and does not have access to client or service records or other modules and screens.

### Resource Specialist II

Users may access only the ResourcePoint module. Users may search the database of area agencies and programs, and view the agency or program detail screens. At this level, the user does not have access to client or service records or other modules and screens. A Resource Specialist II is an agency-level "Information & Referral (I&R) specialist" who may update their own agency and program information.

### Resource Specialist III

Users at this level may access only the ResourcePoint module. Users may search the database of area agencies and programs and view the agency or program detail screens. A Resource Specialist III may add or remove resource groups, including Global (which they get by default). Access to client or service records and other modules and screens is not given. A Resource Specialist III may edit the system-wide news feature.

**Table 1: HMIS User Roles**

	Resource Specialist I	Resource Specialist II	Resource Specialist III	Volunteer	Agency Staff	Case Managers I & II	Case Manager III	Agency Administrator	Executive Director	System Operators	System Administrator I	System Administrator II
<b>Client Point</b>												
Profile				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Assessments						X	X	X	X		X	X
Case Notes						X	X	X	X		X	X
Case Plans						X	X	X	X		X	X
Service Records				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Service Point</b>												
Referrals				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Services Provided					X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Resource Point</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Shelter Point</b>				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Administration</b>												
Add/Edit Users								X	X	X	X	X
Reset Passwords								X	X	X	X	X
Add Provider			X							X	X	X
Edit Provider		#	X					#	#			
Delete Provider		%	X					%	%			
Agency News		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
System Wide News			X							X	X	X
Provider Groups												X
Picklist Data										X	X	X
Licenses										X	X	X
Assessment Admin										X	X	X
Shadow Mode												X
System Preferences												X

X: Users have access to this section of ServicePoint.

%: Users can neither delete the provider to which they belong, nor any of their parent providers.

#: Users cannot edit their parent provider; they may only edit their provider or child providers.

#### Volunteer

Users may access ResourcePoint, and have limited access to ClientPoint and service records. A volunteer may view or edit basic demographic information about clients (the profile screen), but is restricted from all other screens in ClientPoint. A volunteer may also enter new clients, make referrals, and check-in/out clients from a shelter. A volunteer does not have access to the "Services Provided" tab. This access level is designed to allow a volunteer to perform basic intake steps with a new client and then refer the client to an agency staff member or case manager.

#### Agency Staff

Users may access ResourcePoint, have full access to service records, and limited access to ClientPoint. Agency staff may access most functions in ServicePoint, however, they may only access basic demographic data on clients (profile screen). All other screens are restricted including Reports. Agency Staff can add news items to the newswire feature.

#### Case Manager I

Users may access all screens and modules except "Administration." A Case Manager I may access all screens within ClientPoint, except the medical screen for confidentiality reasons. Users may access Reports.

#### Case Manager II

Users may access all screens and modules except "Administration." A Case Manager II may access all screens within ClientPoint, including the medical screen. Users may access Reports.

#### Case Manager III

This role has the same actions available as the Case Manager II with the added ability to see data down their provider's tree like an Agency Administrator.

#### Agency Administrator

Users may access all ServicePoint screens and modules. Agency Administrators may add/remove users and edit agency and program data for their agencies.

#### Executive Director

Users have the same access rights as an Agency Administrator, but rank above the Agency Administrator.

#### System Operator

Users may only access Administration screens. System operators can create new agency providers, add new users, reset passwords, and access other system-level options. Users may order additional user licenses and modify the allocation of licenses. They maintain the system, but may not access any client or service records.

#### System Administrator I

Users have the same access rights to client information as Agency Administrators, but for all agencies in the system. System Administrators also have full access to administrative functions.

#### System Administrator II

There are no system restrictions on users. They have full HMIS access.

## 2.6 HMIS VENDOR REQUIREMENTS

### Physical Security

Access to areas containing HMIS equipment, data and software will be secured.

### Firewall Protection

The vendor will secure the perimeter of its network using technology from firewall vendors. Company system administrators monitor firewall logs to determine unusual patterns and possible system vulnerabilities.

### User Authentication

Users may only access HMIS with a valid username and password combination that is encrypted via SSL for internet transmission to prevent theft. If a user enters an invalid password three consecutive times, they are automatically shut out of that HMIS session. For added security, the session key is automatically scrambled and re-established in the background at regular intervals.

### Application Security

HMIS users will be assigned a system access level that restricts their access to appropriate data.

### Database Security

Wherever possible, all database access is controlled at the operating system and database connection level for additional security. Access to production databases is limited to a minimal number of points; as with production servers, production databases do not share a master password database.

### Technical Support

The vendor will assist DOH HMIS staff to resolve software problems, make necessary modifications for special programming, and will explain system functionality to DOH.

### Technical Performance

The vendor maintains the system, including data backup, data retrieval and server functionality/operation. Upgrades to the system software will be continuously developed and implemented.

### Hardware Disposal

Data stored on broken equipment or equipment intended for disposal will be destroyed using industry standard procedures.

## 2.7 MINIMUM TECHNICAL STANDARDS

### Minimum Computer Requirements

- A PC with a 2 Gigahertz or higher processor, 40GB hard drive, 512 MB RAM, and Microsoft Windows 2000 or XP
- The most recent version of Google Chrome. No additional plug-in is required. It is recommended that your browser have a 128 cipher / encryption strength installed. The browser's cache should be set to "Check for new version of the stored pages: Every visit to page."

- A broadband Internet connection or LAN connection
- Virus protection updates

#### Additional Recommendations

##### Memory

- Windows XP: 4Gig recommended (2 Gig minimum)
- Windows Vista: 2Gig recommended (1 Gig minimum)

##### Monitor

- Screen Display: 1024 by 768 (XGA)

##### Processor

- A Dual-Core processor is recommended

## 2.8 HMIS LICENSE FEES

#### Annual Wisconsin HMIS License Fees

Agencies may purchase licenses at any time. License fees are calculated on a sliding scale. Agencies purchasing 1 to 5 licenses will be charged \$60 per license. Agencies purchasing 6 to 20 licenses will be charged \$60 for each of their first 5 licenses and \$55 for each additional license. Agencies purchasing more than 20 licenses will be charged \$60 for each of their first 5 licenses, \$55 for each license from 6 to 20 and \$45 for each additional license. License fees are listed on Table 2 below.

Billing for licenses will occur once annually in September, covering July - June. The annual fee will cover the subsequent fiscal year and must be paid within 60 days following the date of the invoice.

**Table 2: Example HMIS License Fees**

Number of Users	Annual License Fee	Number of Users	Annual License Fee	Number of Users	Annual License Fee
1	\$60	9	\$520	17	\$960
2	\$120	10	\$575	18	\$1,015
3	\$180	11	\$630	19	\$1,070
4	\$240	12	\$685	20	\$1,125
5	\$300	13	\$740	21	\$1,170
6	\$355	14	\$795	22	\$1,215
7	\$410	15	\$850	23	\$1,260
8	\$465	16	\$905	24	\$1,305

#### Non-use Fee

Agencies with users who do not access their HMIS account at least once every 90 days will be assessed a Non-use Fee. For each user who does not meet the access requirement, the agency will be charged \$250 at the time of annual license renewal.

### 3. Confidentiality and Security

The importance of the integrity and security of HMIS cannot be overstated. Given this importance, HMIS must be administered and operated under high standards of data quality and security. The Department of Administration, Division of Housing and agencies participating in HMIS are jointly responsible for ensuring that HMIS data processing capabilities, including the collection, maintenance, use, disclosure, transmission and destruction of data, comply with the HMIS privacy, security and confidentiality policies and procedures. When a privacy or security standard conflicts with other Federal, state and local laws to which the partner agency must adhere, the partner agency must contact the Division of Housing to collaboratively update the applicable policies for the partner agency to accurately reflect the additional protections.

#### 3.1 DATA ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS

All HMIS data will be handled according to the following major classifications: Shared or Closed Data. HMIS staff will assess all data, and implement appropriate controls to ensure that data classified as shared or closed are handled according to the following procedures.

##### Shared Data

Shared data is unrestricted information that has been entered by one provider and is visible to other providers using HMIS. Wisconsin's HMIS is designed as an open system that defaults to allow shared data. Providers have the option of changing their program settings to keep client data closed.

##### Closed Data

Information entered by one provider that is not visible to other providers using HMIS. Programs that serve victims of domestic violence, individuals with HIV/AIDS, provide youth services, or legal services must enter closed data. Further, programs that provide youth services and legal services may enter clients as "unnamed." Individual client records can be closed at the client's request.

##### Procedures for transmission and storage of data

- Open Data: This is data that does not contain personal identifying information. The data should be handled discretely, unless it is further classified as Public Data. The data must be stored out of site, and may be transmitted via internal or first-class mail until it is considered public data.
- Confidential Data at the Agency Level: Confidential data contains personal identifying information. Each agency shall develop rules governing the access of confidential data in HMIS to ensure that those staff needing confidential data access will have access, and access is otherwise restricted. The agency rules shall also cover the destruction of paper and electronic data in a manner that will ensure that privacy is maintained and that proper controls are in place for any hard copy and electronic data that is based on HMIS data.

Whenever confidential data is accessed:

- Hard copies shall be shredded when disposal is appropriate. Hard copies shall be stored in a secure environment that is inaccessible to the general public or staff not requiring access.
- Hard copies shall not be left out in the open or unattended.
- Electronic copies shall be stored only where the employee can access the data.

- Electronic copies shall be stored where a password is required to access the data if on shared server space.

All public data must be classified as aggregated public or unpublished restricted access data.

#### Aggregated Public Data

Information published according to the “Reporting Parameters and Guidelines” (HMIS Policies and Procedures Section 3.2).

#### Unpublished Restricted Access Data

Information scheduled, but not yet approved, for publication. Examples include draft reports, fragments of data sets, and data without context or data that have not been analyzed.

#### Procedures for Transmission and Storage of Data

- Aggregated Public Data: Security controls are not required.
- Unpublished Restricted Access Data:
  1. Draft or Fragmented Data – Accessible only to authorized HMIS staff and agency personnel. Requires auditing of access and must be stored in a secure out-of-sight location. Data can be transmitted via e-mail, internal departmental or first class mail. If mailed, data must be labeled confidential.
  2. Confidential Data: Requires encryption at all times. Must be magnetically overwritten and destroyed. Hard copies of data must be stored in an out-of-sight secure location.

## 3.2 DATA REPORTING PARAMETERES AND GUIDELINES

All open data will be handled according to the following classifications - *Public Data, Internal Data, and Restricted Data* - and should be handled according to the following procedures.

#### Principles for Release of Data

- Only de-identified aggregated data will be released except as specified below.
- No identified client data may be released without informed consent unless otherwise specified by Wisconsin State and Federal confidentiality laws. All requests for such information must be addressed to the owner/participating agency where the data was collected.
- Program specific information used for annual grant program reports and program specific information included in grant applications is classified as public information. No other program specific information will be released without written consent.
- There will be full access to aggregate data included in published reports.
- Reports of aggregate data may be made directly available to the public.
- The parameters of the aggregated data, that is, where the data comes from and what it includes will be presented with each report.
- Data will be mined for agencies requesting reports on a case-by-case basis.
- Requests must be written with a description of specific data to be included and for what duration of time. Requests are to be submitted 30 days prior to the date the report is needed. Exceptions to the 30-day notice may be made.
- DOH reserves the right to deny any request for aggregated data.



### 3.3 RELEASE OF DATA FOR GRANT FUNDERS

Entities providing funding to agencies or programs required to use HMIS will not have automatic access to HMIS. Access to HMIS will only be granted by DOH when there is a voluntary written agreement in place between the funding entity and the agency or program. Funding for any agency or program using HMIS cannot be contingent upon establishing a voluntary written agreement allowing the funder HMIS access.

### 3.4 BASELINE PRIVACY POLICY

#### Collection of Personal Information

Personal information will be collected for HMIS only when it is needed to provide services, when it is needed for another specific purpose of the agency where a client is receiving services, or when it is required by law. Personal information may be collected for these purposes:

- To provide or coordinate services for clients
- To find programs that may provide additional client assistance
- To comply with government and grant reporting obligations
- To assess the state of homelessness in the community, and to assess the condition and availability of affordable housing to better target services and resources

Only lawful and fair means are used to collect personal information.

Personal information is collected with the knowledge and consent of clients. It is assumed that clients consent to the collection their personal information as described in this notice when they seek assistance from an agency using HMIS and provide the agency with their personal information.

If an agency reasonably believes that a client is a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence, or if a client reports that he/she is a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence, explicit permission is required to enter and share the client's information in HMIS.

Personal information may also be collected from:

- Additional individuals seeking services with a client
- Other private organizations that provide services and participate in HMIS

Upon request, clients must be able to access the *Use and Disclosure of Personal Information* policy found below.

#### Use and Disclosure of Personal Information

These policies explain why an agency collects personal information from clients. Personal information may be used or disclosed for activities described in this part of the notice. Client consent to the use or disclosure of personal information for the purposes described in this notice, and for reasons that are compatible with purposes described in this notice but not listed, is assumed. Clients must give consent before their personal information is used or disclosed for any purpose not described here.

Personal information may be used or disclosed for the following purposes:

1. *To provide or coordinate services to individuals. Client records are shared with other organizations that may have separate privacy policies and that may allow different uses and disclosures of the information. If clients access services at one of these other*

*organizations, they will be notified of the agency's privacy and sharing policy.*  
{OPTIONAL}

2. To carry out administrative functions such as legal audits, personnel, oversight, and management functions.
3. For research and statistical purposes. Personal information released for research and statistical purposes will be anonymous.
4. For academic research conducted by an individual or institution that has a formal relationship with the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Housing. The research must be conducted by an individual employed by or affiliated with the organization or institution. All research projects must be conducted under a written research agreement approved in writing by the designated agency administrator or executive director. The written research agreement must:
  - Establish the rules and limitations for processing personal information and providing security for personal information in the course of the research.
  - Provide for the return or proper disposal of all personal information at the conclusion of the research.
  - Restrict additional use or disclosure of personal information, except where required by law.
  - Require that the recipient of the personal information formally agree to comply with all terms and conditions of the written research agreement, and
  - Cannot be a substitute for approval of the research project by an Institutional Review Board, Privacy Board or other applicable human subjects protection institution if appropriate.
5. When required by law. Personal information will be released to the extent that use or disclosure complies with the requirements of the law.
6. To avert a serious threat to health or safety if:
  - the use or disclosure is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of an individual or the public, and
  - the use or disclosure is made to a person reasonably able to prevent or lessen the threat, including the target of the threat.
7. To report to a governmental authority (including a social service or protective services agency) authorized by law to receive reports of abuse, neglect or domestic violence, information about an individual reasonably believed to be a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence. When the personal information of a victim of abuse, neglect or domestic violence is disclosed, the individual whose information has been released will promptly be informed, except if:
  - it is believed that informing the individual would place the individual at risk of serious harm, or
  - a personal representative (such as a family member or friend) who is responsible for the abuse, neglect or other injury is the individual who would be informed, and it is believed that informing the personal representative would not be in the best interest of the individual as determined in the exercise of professional judgment.

8. For a law enforcement purpose (if consistent with applicable law and standards of ethical conduct) under any of these circumstances:
  - In response to a lawful court order, court-ordered warrant, subpoena or summons issued by a judicial officer or a grand jury subpoena, if the court ordered disclosure goes through the State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration and is reviewed by the Department Secretary for any additional action or comment.
  - If the law enforcement official makes a written request for personal information. The written request must meet the following requirements:
    - i. Is signed by a supervisory official of the law enforcement agency seeking the personal information.
    - ii. States that the information is relevant and material to a legitimate law enforcement investigation.
    - iii. Identifies the personal information sought.
    - iv. Is specific and limited in scope to the purpose for which the information is sought, and
    - v. Is approved for release by the State of Wisconsin, Department of Administration legal counsel after a review period of seven to fourteen days.
  - If it is believed that the personal information constitutes evidence of criminal conduct that occurred at the agency where the client receives services.
  - If the official is an authorized federal official seeking personal information for the provision of protective services to the President or other persons authorized by 18 U.S.C. 3056, or to a foreign heads of state or other persons authorized by 22 U.S.C. 2709(a)(3), or for the conduct of investigations authorized by 18 U.S.C. 871 (threats against the President and others), and the information requested is specific and limited in scope to the extent reasonably practicable in light of the purpose for which the information is sought.
9. For law enforcement or another public official authorized to receive a client's personal information to conduct an immediate enforcement activity that depends upon the disclosure. Personal information may be disclosed when a client is incapacitated and unable to agree to the disclosure if waiting until the individual is able to agree to the disclosure would materially and adversely affect the enforcement activity. In this case, the disclosure will only be made if it is not intended to be used against the individual.
10. To comply with government reporting obligations for homeless management information systems and for oversight of compliance with homeless management information system requirements.

#### Inspection and Correction of Personal Information

Clients may inspect and receive a copy of their person information maintained in HMIS. The agency where the client receives services will offer to explain any information that a client may not understand.

If the information listed in HMIS is believed to be inaccurate or incomplete, a client may submit a verbal or written request to have his/her information corrected. Inaccurate or incomplete data may be deleted, or marked as inaccurate or incomplete and supplemented with additional information.

A request to inspect or copy one's personal information may be denied if:

- The information was compiled in reasonable anticipation of litigation or comparable proceedings
- The information was obtained under a promise of confidentiality and if the disclosure would reveal the source of the information, or
- The life or physical safety of any individual would be reasonably endangered by disclosure of the personal information.

If a request for inspection access or personal information correction is denied, the agency where the client receives services will explain the reason for the denial. The client's request and the reason for the denial will be included in the client's record.

Requests for inspection access or personal information correction may be denied if they are made in a repeated and/or harassing manner.

#### Data Quality

Only personal information relevant for the purpose(s) for which it will be used will be collected. Personal information must be accurate and complete.

Client files not used in seven years may be made inactive in HMIS. DOH will check with agencies before making client files inactive. Personal information may be retained for a longer period if required by statute, regulation, contract or another obligation.

#### Complaints and Accountability

Questions or complaints about the privacy and security policies and practices may be submitted to the agency where the client receives services. Complaints specific to HMIS should be submitted to the HMIS agency administrator and program director. If no resolution can be found, the complaint will be forwarded to system administrators at the Department of Administration, Division of Housing and the agency's executive director. If there is no resolution, the Wisconsin HMIS Steering Committee will oversee final arbitration. All other complaints will follow the agency's grievance procedure as outlined in the agency's handbook.

All HMIS users (including employees, volunteers, affiliates, contractors and associates) are required to comply with this privacy notice. Users must receive and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this privacy notice.

### **3.4 USE OF A COMPARABLE DATABASE BY VICTIM SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Victim service providers, private nonprofit agencies whose primary mission is to provide services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, must not directly enter or provide data into HMIS if they are legally prohibited from participating in HMIS. Victim service providers that are recipients of funds requiring participation in HMIS, but are prohibited from entering data in HMIS, must use a comparable database to enter client information. A comparable database is a database that can be used to collect client-level data over time and generate unduplicated aggregated reports based on the client information entered into the database. The reports generated by a comparable database must be accurate and provide the same information as the reports generated by HMIS.

### 3.5 USER CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Users who are also clients with files in HMIS are prohibited from entering or editing information in their own file. All users are also prohibited from entering or editing information in files of immediate family members. All users must sign the Wisconsin User Agreement, which includes a statement describing this limitation, and report any potential conflict of interest to their Agency Administrator. The System Administrator may run the audit trail report to determine if there has been a violation of the conflict of interest agreement.

### 3.6 SECURITY PROCEDURE TRAINING FOR USERS

All users must receive security training prior to being given access to HMIS. Security training will be covered during the new user training for all new users. All users must receive on-going annual training on security procedures from the Department of Administration, Division of Housing.

### 3.7 VIOLATION OF SECURITY PROCEDURES

All potential violations of any security protocols will be investigated and any user found to be in violation of security protocols will be sanctioned accordingly. Sanctions may include but are not limited to: a formal letter of reprimand, suspension of system privileges, revocation of system privileges and criminal prosecution.

If possible, all confirmed security violations will be communicated in writing to the affected client within 14 days, unless the client cannot be located. If the client cannot be located, a written description of the violation and efforts to locate the client will be prepared by the Department of Administration, Division of Housing HMIS staff and placed in the client's file at the Agency that originated the client's record.

Any agency that is found to have consistently and/or flagrantly violated security procedures may have their access privileges suspended or revoked. All sanctions are imposed by the DOH HMIS staff. All sanctions may be appealed to the HMIS Steering Committee.

### 3.8 PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING SECURITY INCIDENTS

Users and Agency Administrators should report all unlawful access of HMIS and unlawful attempted access of HMIS. This includes theft of usernames and passwords. Security incidents should be reported to the DOH System Administrator. The DOH System Administrator will use the HMIS user audit trail report to determine the extent of the breach of security.

### 3.9 DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

Wisconsin's HMIS is covered under Bowman Systems Disaster Recovery Plan. Due to the nature of technology, unforeseen service outages may occur. In order to assure service reliability, Bowman Systems provides the following disaster recovery plan. Plan highlights include:

- Database tape backups occur nightly.

- Tape backups are stored offsite.
- Seven day backup history is stored locally on instantly accessible Raid 10 storage.
- One month backup history is stored off site.
- Access to Bowman Systems emergency line to provide assistance related to “outages” or “downtime” 24 hours a day.
- Data is backed up locally on instantly-accessible disk storage every 24 hours.
- The application server is backed up offsite, out-of-state, on a different internet provider and on a separate electrical grid via secured Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection.
- Backups of the application site are near-instantaneous (no files older than 5 minutes).
- The database is replicated nightly at an offsite location in case of a primary data center failure.
- Priority level response (ensures downtime will not exceed 4 hours).

#### Standard Data Recovery

Wisconsin’s HMIS database is stored online, and is readily accessible for approximately 24 hours a day. Tape backups of the database are kept for approximately one month. Upon recognition of a system failure, HMIS can be copied to a standby server. The database can be restored, and the site recreated within three to four hours if online backups are accessible. As a rule, a tape restoration can be made within six to eight hours. On-site backups are made once daily. A restore of this backup may incur some data loss between when the backup was made and when the system failure occurred.

All internal servers are configured in hot-swappable hard drive RAID configurations. All systems are configured with hot-swappable redundant power supply units. Our Internet connectivity is comprised of a primary and secondary connection with separate internet service providers to ensure redundancy in the event of an ISP connectivity outage. The primary Core routers are configured with redundant power supplies, and are configured in tandem so that if one core router fails the secondary router will continue operation with little to no interruption in service. All servers, network devices, and related hardware are powered via APC Battery Backup units that are connected in turn to electrical circuits, which are connected to a building generator.

All client data is backed-up online and stored on a central file server repository for 24 hours. Each night a tape backup is made of the client database and secured in a bank vault.

Historical data can be restored from tape as long as the data requested is newer than 30 days old. As a rule, the data can be restored to a standby server within four hours without affecting the current live site. Data can then be selectively queried and/or restored to the live site.

For power outage, HMIS is backed up via APC battery back-up units, which are connected via generator-backed up electrical circuits. For a system crash, a system restore will take four hours. There is potential for some small data loss (data that was entered between the last backup and when the failure occurred) if a tape restore is necessary. If the failure is not hard drive related, the data restore time will possibly be shorter as the drives themselves can be repopulated into a standby server.

All major outages are immediately brought to the attention of executive management. Bowman Systems support staff helps manage communication or messaging to the System Administrator as progress is made to address the service outage.

## 4. Data Requirements

### 4.1 DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

Partner Agencies are responsible for asking all clients a minimum set of questions for use in aggregate analysis. These questions are included in custom assessments that are created by HMIS System Administrators. The required data elements depend on the program. The mandatory data elements in each assessment are displayed in *red* text and/or specific text indicating that the field is required.

Programs that do not adhere to the minimum data entry standards will be notified of their deficiencies and given appropriate training on how to correctly enter data. Programs that do not meet minimum data entry standards will have HMIS access suspended until such time that DOH HMIS staff believes the program could begin to correctly enter information. After the two initial warnings from DOH, a program still not adhering to the minimum data entry requirements will be made permanently inactive, and licenses will be revoked until the agency can demonstrate to HMIS staff that it is capable of maintaining minimum data requirements.

DOH will submit a report to each CoC annually that identifies the degree to which all agencies within the CoC are meeting the minimum data entry standards.

The Agency Administrator must identify the assessments and requirements for each program, and properly set up each program in WISP.

While HMIS databases are required to have the capacity to accept XML imports, DOH reserves the right to not allow XML imports into Wisconsin's HMIS. Allowing XML imports will impact data integrity and increase the likelihood of duplication of client files in the system.

### 4.2 DATA INTEGRITY AND RELIABILITY

Guidelines clearly articulating the minimum expectations for data entry for all programs entering data in HMIS will be sent to Agency Administrators and posted on the Division of Housing Wisconsin ServicePoint webpage. Agency Administrators must ensure that the minimum data elements are fulfilled for every program.

Partner agencies are responsible for the overall quality, accuracy and completeness of data entered by their staff for their clients. HMIS staff will monitor data collection of the HUD Universal Data Elements and hold participating agencies accountable for not entering required data.

## 5. Glossary

**Agency Administrator** – the individual responsible for HMIS use at each partner agency that has ten or more HMIS users.

**Aggregated Public Data** – data that is published and available publicly. This type of data does not identify clients listed in the HMIS.

**Closed Data** – information entered by one provider that is not visible to other providers using HMIS.

**Confidential Data** – contains personal identifying information.

**DOH** – the Division of Housing, which is part of the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration

**HMIS – Homeless Management Information System** – an internet-based database that is used by homeless service organizations across Wisconsin to record and store client-level information about the numbers, characteristics and needs of homeless persons and those at risk of homelessness.

**HMIS Advisory Board** – the group of HMIS users who are responsible for approving and implementing the HMIS Policies and Procedures, and for working to make improvements to Wisconsin's HMIS.

**HMIS Data Lead** – advanced HMIS users who assist homeless service agencies within a specific geographic region or Continuum of Care with using HMIS on behalf of DOH. HMIS Data Leads provide assistance with system training and maintenance, and using HMIS to run reports.

**HMIS License Fee** – the annual fee paid by partner agencies to allow each HMIS user at their agency continued access to the database.

**HMIS User Level** – HMIS users are assigned a specific user level that limits the data the user is able to access in the database.

**HMIS Vendor** – the Wisconsin HMIS software vendor is Bowman Systems. The HMIS vendor designs the HMIS and provides ongoing support to the System Administrators.

**Minimum Data Entry Standards** – a minimum set of questions that must be completed for each client to provide data for use in aggregate analysis.

**Open Data** – does not contain personal identifying information.

**Partner Agencies** – the homeless service organizations that use HMIS.

**System Administrators** – staff in the Division of Housing who are responsible for overseeing HMIS users and use in Wisconsin. The System Administrators allow users HMIS access



and provide training; ensure user compliance with HMIS policies and procedures; and make policy recommendations to the Steering Committee.

**Shared Data** – unrestricted information that has been entered by one provider and is visible to other providers using HMIS.

**Unpublished Restricted Access Data** – information scheduled, but not yet approved, for publication.

**Victim Service Provider** – a nonprofit agency with a primary mission to provide services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.